

FBI Uses Lie Tests in Probe of Leaks at State

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FBI agents used lie detectors to question State Department officials recently in an inter-agency investigation of news "leakage" of security information, it was established yesterday.

State Department press spokesman Robert J. McCloskey acknowledged at a news briefing that Justice Department agents investigated inside the State Department and "other agencies."

McCloskey said "this has happened from time to time... when certain information is published" from unauthorized sources that is judged to be "harmful to the national interest."

This is the first time since the era of the late Sen. Joseph R. McCarthy in the early 1950s that such a practice in the State Department has come to public attention. Many State Department officials are themselves concerned about the intimidating effect of the procedure, and insist it is limited and is no revival of that inquisitorial period in U.S. history.

McCloskey said in response to questions that State Department officials have been advised with renewed emphasis recently "to use their common sense and discretion" in talking with newsmen about sensitive security subjects. But he denied that any "written instructions" have been circulated to restrict press contact with officials.

"We are not trying to restrict access by newsmen," McCloskey said emphatically.

Reports and rumors of the investigations at State have spiraled behind the scenes, however, to the consternation of many ranking officials who are concerned that the inhibitions, real or exaggerated, will damage morale and operations.

McCloskey declined to discuss whether lie detectors, or polygraphs as they are technically called, were used at State. It was confirmed, however, that the instruments, which measure human reactions to questions, were employed in interrogations concerning

tion about U.S. bargaining positions in the strategic arms limitation talks (SALT) with the Soviet Union, now under way in Helsinki, Finland.

Sources said that a relatively "small number" of employees were involved in the interrogations by FBI agents.

This group, it was said, in turn was narrowed down to a smaller number, "about three or four," it was claimed. They were reportedly asked if they would submit to the polygraph tests, "volunteered" to do so, and "came up clean," in effect apparently clearing the State Department of responsibility for the "leak" in this case.

The degree of voluntarism actually involved in such circumstances is often an open question, officials privately concede. Investigations of this kind often have a dual purpose — to attempt to find the "leaker," and to serve as a warning to others.

McCloskey said in answer to questions, "We have cooperated with agents of the Justice Department who have undertaken investigations within the department at the same time that agents also were doing the same in other agencies of the government with reference to stories in which sensitive information was disclosed on an unauthorized basis."

"I am not in a position to get into detail on the anatomy of that kind of investigation" or the numbers of persons involved, he said.

McCloskey said these investigations have been conducted with the "full approval and concurrence" of Secretary of State William P. Rogers. Rogers is scheduled today to hold his first full press conference since June 15.

According to other sources, the latest investigation at State, involving the use of lie detectors, was touched off by a story on the nuclear arms talks in the New York Times of July 23 by William Beecher, the Times' Pentagon reporter.

The White House reportedly ordered a full-scale investigation, which spread to State. Top officials expressed indignation over what they called a disclosure of the U.S. position

to the Russians. At that time, State labeled the story "a most unfortunate breach of security."

A Defense Department spokesman declined to comment yesterday on investigations there, or to say whether lie detectors were used at the Pentagon. That practice is said to be more customary at the Pentagon than at State in the investigation of major news "leaks." Normally, the State Department uses its own security agents for such inquiries, officials said.

One administration source said earlier this week that disciplinary action has been taken over the news leak of U.S. proposals in the SALT talks, but he declined to specify the agency involved.

McCloskey told newsmen yesterday that, so far as he knows, the disclosure of the secret Pentagon history on Vietnam, starting in mid-June, was not the take-off point for the current investigating pattern.

A general tightening of access to security information has been evident in Washington for many months, newsmen noted. Officials attribute this to the unusual number of major diplomatic negotiations under way, including the new U.S.-China relations, the SALT talks and negotiations on Berlin, Vietnam and the Middle East. Lower-ranking officials have become doubly cautious about discussing anything.

McCloskey, deputy assistant secretary of state and special assistant to Rogers, is a veteran professional in the press relations field. He indicated yesterday that he had sought to forestall a wholesale tightening of information flow by officials overreacting to limitations on discussing especially sensitive subjects.

"In my experience," said McCloskey, "the policy of this department has been exemplary in terms of our (news) contact. I know of no foreign office in the world where the degree of access is compara-

State Department officials also know, however, that the department carries a special burden, a heritage of the loyalty-security investigations which decimated its experts. An unusually candid self-examination of the department last year by its own officials warned that the investigatory consequences of "McCarthyism on departmental thinking" only began to diminish "during the 1960s" and that even in the 1970s "some of the bitter taste lingers on, however, and still inhibits to some degree the expression of unorthodox views."

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